

Physical Activity for Youth

Fact Sheet

We don't always move our bodies as much as we need to and this applies to youth as well. Some youth enjoy organized sports but others may feel awkward or clumsy in front of their friends. The good news is that there are many different types of physical activities that appeal to youth. Non-competitive activities such as skating, biking or hiking works just as well. The important thing to remember is that all activity counts! Support provided from family and friends has been shown to positively affect regular physical activity among youth.

Why is Physical Activity Important?

Healthy habits developed during childhood and adolescence make a difference as we age.

- Staying healthy and fit lowers the risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes – the leading cause of premature death.
- Physical activity helps self-esteem and reduces stress.
- The benefits of regular physical activity are remarkable: weight control, lower blood pressure, lower cholesterol, improved cardiovascular system, increased energy and stamina, stronger immune system, increases suppleness and flexibility, stronger toned muscles and stronger bones!

The U.S. Surgeon General recommends that youth partake of moderate physical activity which is equivalent to brisk walking – 30 minutes a day, at least 10 minutes at a time, 5 or more days a week. For cardiovascular fitness, engage in vigorous physical activity for at least 20 minutes a day, 3 to 5 days each week.

How Can Parents and Adults Who Care About Teens Help ?

As an adult in a teen's life, you can jump in and make a difference.

- Get involved as a participant or spectator. When a parent enjoys physical activities regularly, teens are more likely to follow suit.
- Provide options, from organized team sports to individual activities like skating, biking and swimming.

Some Facts about Tennessee Youth

*Tennessee Department of Health, Adolescent Health Program, 615-741-7353
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- 61.1% of Tennessee students in grades 9 through 12, reported they engage in vigorous physical activity that promotes cardio respiratory fitness 3 or more days per week for 20 or more minutes per occasion. (TN Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2003). This represents a **decrease** of 2.3% since 1999. The Healthy People 2010 goal is for 85% of all youth to engage in vigorous activity.
- Only 24.1% of Tennessee high school students reported that they engaged in moderate physical activity for at least 30 minutes, 5 or more days of the past week. (TN Youth Risk Behavior Survey – 2003). The Healthy People 2010 goal is at least 30%.
- Only 28.7% of Tennessee high school students report that they attend physical education class in school five days a week. (TN Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2003).
- In 2003, 15.2% of Tennessee high school students indicated they were overweight. (TN Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2003). This represents a 3.2 % **increase** since 1999.
- On an average school day, 65.1% of Tennessee's high school students report that they watch 2 or more hours of television. (TN Youth Risk Survey 2003).